

**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
2015 Gold King Mine Blowout - Polrep/Sitrep  
Initial Polrep/Sitrep**



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Region 8**



**Subject: SITREP #1  
Initial Situation Report  
Gold King Mine Blowout**

**San Juan County, Colorado  
Latitude: 37.8945 Longitude: -107.6384**

**To:**  
**Thru:** David Ostrander, Regional Incident Coordinator  
**From:** R8 IMT Situation Unit  
**Date:** 08/06/2015  
**Reporting Period:**

**Executive Summary**

On August 5, 2015, an EPA team working to investigate and address contamination at the Gold King Mine in San Juan County, Colorado, unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately one million gallons of water that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

Following the release, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) notified water users downstream so they could take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes. The Town of Silverton does not take water out of the affected portions of Cement Creek.

The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River. The water associated with the release is obvious and highly discolored. As a precaution, EPA recommends that recreational users of the Animas River avoid contact with or use of the river until the pulse of mine water passes. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users. EPA will also be assessing damage near the mine portal and any residual releases of water at the mine site.

Water is continuing to be released from the mine at a slower rate. EPA has met with San Juan County, and will be meeting with La Plata County later today.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

<b>Site Number:</b>	<b>Contract Number:</b>
<b>D.O. Number:</b>	<b>Action Memo Date:</b>
<b>Response Authority:</b> CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b> Emergency
<b>Response Lead:</b> EPA	<b>Incident Category:</b>
<b>NPL Status:</b>	<b>Operable Unit:</b>
<b>Mobilization Date:</b> 08/05/2015	<b>Start Date:</b> 08/05/15
<b>Demob Date:</b>	<b>Completion Date:</b>
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>	<b>RCRIS ID:</b>
<b>ERNS No.:</b>	<b>State Notification:</b> 08/05/15

#### **1.1.1 Incident Category**

#### **1.1.2 Site Description.**

##### **1.1.2.1 Location** San Juan County, Colorado, and La Plata County, Colorado.

##### **1.1.2.2 Description of Threat**

The City of Durango depends on daily withdrawals from the Animas River for their drinking water. The river is also used for recreational purposes, including fishing and rafting.

#### **1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results**

Water sampling has occurred (analysis pending), and pH levels and other water quality parameters are being monitored.

The incident overall objective is to protect the drinking water supply of the City of Durango, and citizens who may be using the river for various purposes.

### **1.3 Critical Resource Needs**

No information available at this time.

### **1.4 Strategic Considerations**

No information available at this time.

## **2. Current Activities**

### **2.1 Operations Section**

#### **2.1.1 Narrative**

1. Water quality sampling has occurred and some results are available. An OCS has been deployed to the area. EPA Region 8 staff are coordinating with relevant county/city officials.

#### **2.1.2 Response Actions to Date**

Water quality sampling by EPA Region 8 staff occurred last night and this morning, and will occur mid-day, at 6:00pm tonight, and at midnight. START will take over the sampling after this. A lab in Golden, Colorado is being used to analyze the samples, but a closer lab is being sought. Meetings have been held with La Plata County officials, and a meeting with San Juan County officials is planned for later today. EPA Region 8 or ATSDR will consult with them on personal safety issues for people potentially affected by the contaminated water.

EPA Region 8 staff will meet with the Durango City Engineer to analyze and implement measures to protect the Durango drinking water supply.

#### **2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)**

#### **2.1.4 Progress Metrics**

### **2.2 Planning Section**

#### **2.2.1 Anticipated Activities**

The Planning Section's Unit stood up as of 08/06/2015 in the Region 8 REOC. Daily meeting schedules are being developed.

##### **2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities**

##### **2.2.1.2 Next Steps**

##### **2.2.2 Issues**

### **2.3 Logistics Section**

No information at this time.

## **2.4 Finance Section**

### **2.4.1 Narrative**

Not stood up

<b>Mission Number</b>	<b>Mission Assignment Description</b>	<b>Funding Amount (in thousands)</b>	<b>Status</b>

## **2.5 Other Command Staff**

### **2.5.1 Safety Officer**

### **2.5.2 Liaison Officer**

### **2.5.3 Information Officer**

### **2.5.4 Weather Forecast**

Weather forecast for August 06, 2015:

Mostly sunny, with a high near 88. West wind 5 to 10 mph.

## **3. Participating Entities**

### **3.1 Unified Command**

TBD

### **3.2 Cooperating Agencies**

The Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office is monitoring effects on wildlife in the affected area.

## **4. Personnel On Site**

Org Chart for EPA IMT

Resources for Colorado Floods 2013	
	08/06/2015
Group	Number
EPA @ REOC	13
Contractors @ REOC	0
EPA in Field	2
Contractors in Field	Several (count TBD)
WERT Reg 8	0

#### 5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

#### 6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

#### 7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.